Hafa Adai!

Miss Earth Northern Marianas launches '24 Holiday Gift Drive. PAGE 3
BECQ gets new director. PAGE 4

12 DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS

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Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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APA

File photo of an Asia Pacific Airlines plane.

ON WHISTLEBLOWER COMPLAINT

APA disagrees with US Labor findings

Asia Pacific Airlines said it strongly disagrees with yesterday's U.S. Department of Labor ruling ordering the Guam-based cargo carrier to pay $2 million in wages, damages, and attorney's fees to a former pilot that Asia Pacific Airlines said was terminated following a serious breach of safety protocol which occurred at the Honolulu Airport on Nov. 21, 2021.

In a press release, Asia Pacific Airlines said the ruling inexplicably ignores significant evidence including sworn statements of material witnesses. Asia Pacific

See LABOR on Page 4

Taxi driver attacked, robbed

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

Police are on the hunt for five men who reportedly assaulted and robbed a taxi driver after he dropped them off last Tuesday evening in Agingan.

According to Department of Public Safety, on Dec. 10 at around 8:35pm, officers were alerted of a robbery incident at the beachside near the Coral Ocean Resort in Agingan.

DPS assistant chief of police and acting public information officer Simon T. Manacop said that their preliminary investigation revealed that a group of five males had

See TAXI on Page 4

CHRYSTAL MARINO

Light coming from one of these pavilions is a welcome sight at this very dark part of Coral Ocean Beach in Agingan.

Star Marianas says eviction notice unjustified

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Christian

Star Marianas Air, Inc. is pushing back against the Commonwealth Ports Authority's eviction notice and denial of its hangar lease renewal request claiming the actions taken by CPA based on airport use fees is unjustified.

Last week, CPA issued a notice of denial of Star Marianas'

See STAR on Page 4

OPA issues advisory opinion on volunteering for a not-for-profits

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
delatorreferdie@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

While a not-for-profit entity may engage in soliciting donations, it is important that any such activity does not involve the government employee, according to the Office of the Public Auditor.

OPA legal counsel Joseph Przyuski said this would avoid the most obvious restrictions

See OPA on Page 4

INSIDE

LOCAL

Saipan Community Church will be having its 2024 Christmas Feast this Sunday, Dec. 15, starting at 4pm with presentations from various groups like Saipan Community School and San Vicente Elementary School and culminating with SCC's Choir Cantata.

PAGE 8

WORLD

The U.N. General Assembly overwhelmingly approved resolutions Wednesday demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and backing the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees that Israel has moved to ban.

PAGE 10

LIFE & STYLE

After a year where much changed but some things held steady, here's our annual, very selective trip down pop culture memory lane

PAGE 11

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Local

Miss Earth Northern Marianas launches '24 Holiday Gift Drive

By RACQUEL H. FLOYD
raxfloyd@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Miss Earth Northern Marianas 2024 Heavenly Pangelinan announced that an initiative is underway to provide gifts to underprivileged children and young adults this holiday season.

"This holiday season, I am leading an initiative to bring joy to children and young adults in our community who may be less fortunate. As Miss Northern Marianas Earth 2023 and a community advocate, I am reaching out to request your support in this meaningful cause," she said.

Donations of new or gently used toys, age-appropriate gifts for young adults, wrapping supplies, and monetary contributions will be accepted by her 2024 Holiday Gift Drive.

"We are accepting donations, including new or gently used toys in good condition, age-appropriate gifts for young adults, gift wrapping materials, and monetary contributions, which will be used exclusively for purchasing gifts and supplies. Monetary donations can be made through PayPal or in-person collection."

According to Pangelinan, the cause benefits three organizations—Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., Center for

See MISS on Page 4

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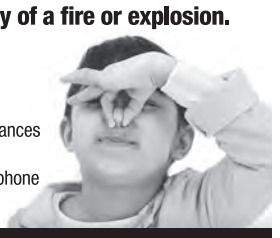

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BECQ gets new director

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality has been appointed a new acting administrator following the passing of former administrator Eliceo Cabrera.

Last week, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios sent out a memorandum to all department agency heads informing them that he has appointed Floyd Masga to serve as BECQ's acting administrator.

Masga

The appointment comes just days after the news of Cabrera's untimely passing.

"Effective Dec. 4, 2024, [Masga] will be appointed as the acting administrator of the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality until a permanent administrator is selected. Please extend your full cooperation and assistance to Mr. Masga as he assumes this new responsibility during this transition period," said Palacios.

Masga carries a wealth of knowledge in the field of environmental conservation.

Prior to his acting role, Masga served as cultural liason for Lynker Corp. where one of his job duties was organizing and facilitating in-person community engagement events across the CNMI to gather input on protected resources under NOAA Fisheries' jurisdiction, including green sea turtles, Giant Clams, and coral proposed critical habitat.

Prior to that, Masga served a special advisor for the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

Masga also served as chairman for the Marianas Trench Monument advisory council as well as the island coordinator for Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council.

TAXI

From page 1

called for taxi service at Cool Laundry in Fina Sisu, and upon the taxi operator's arrival, picked up and drove them males to their requested destination—a pavilion located at the beach area of the Coral Ocean Resort.

"Officers learned from the taxi operator that when they arrived at the beach area of COP, one of the occupants used the seat belt to choke him while others started punching his face and head. The operator was able to run away and reach another pavilion where he sought assistance from people who were at the pavilion..."

Manacop stated that was when the victim was able to call the police. "The victim sustained injuries on his face and was later transported to the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. for treatment. Officers further learned that perpetrators were able to take the victim's cellphones and cash that was secured in a fanny pack."

Manacop shared that DPS is asking the community's assistance in the case. If anyone has information about this incident, they may call the DPS Criminal Investigation Bureau at (670) 664-9042, DPS headquarters at (670) 664-9001 or the Crimestoppers hotline at (670) 234-7272 if they wish to remain anonymous.

Manacop said that the five will most likely be charged with assault and battery as well as robbery. The case remains an open investigation.

STAR

From page 1

request for an extension on its Tinian hangar lease.

Aside from denial, CPA essentially is evicting Star Marianas from the premises and has given them 30 days to clear out.

Yesterday, in a statement from Star Marianas president Shaun Christian, he said CPA's decision to deny the renewal of the hangar lease is based on disputed fees which Star Marianas has contested in court due to alleged significant deficiencies in CPA's fee-setting methodologies.

"These deficiencies, acknowledged by CPA itself and confirmed by a Superior Court ruling, highlight CPA's failure to ensure that fees align with the standards mandated by regulatory authorities having jurisdiction over the airport. Instead, the CPA has imposed fees based on its own initiatives, taken without the consent of the airlines or adherence to federally established requirements for transparency, proportionality, and equity," said Christian.

Christian adds that despite Star Marianas' request for a transparent breakdown of fees, CPA has not cooperated therefore Star is arguing that the actions taken, like the eviction notice, is unjustified.

"Despite Star Marianas' repeated requests for a detailed, transparent breakdown of fees to ensure compliance, CPA has provided no timeline or specifics about when this information will be made available. Until CPA corrects these deficiencies and adheres to the regulations required by federal authorities, the collection of disputed fees and actions based on those fees, including the eviction notice, are both unjustified and unenforceable," he said.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

OPA

From page 1

on the solicitation of donations and gifts by public employees under the CNMI Ethics Code.

Przyuski noted that it is also important to avoid any appearance that the not-for-profit entity is soliciting any gifts on behalf of the government as that appearance may violate the prohibitions on soliciting donations from private entities who are regulated by the government.

Przyuski issued the advisory opinion on Friday after OPA received an inquiry whether a government employee could volunteer for a not-for-profit organization. Temporary public auditor Dora I. Deleon Guerrero reviewed the opinion on that same day.

The legal counsel did not disclose the identity of the requesting party and that of others involved.

The not-for-profit organization membership consisted of a variety of CNMI government entities and members of the private sector. The organization engages in activities that align with and advance the government's interests. Przyuski's opinion relies on assumed general facts that the government employee volunteering for the not-for-profit entity during government time is only engaged in activities that further a legitimate governmental function of the employee's government employer.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

LABOR

From page 1

Airlines said it will formally file objections to the U.S. Labor secretary's findings and request a hearing before an administrative law judge.

"At the time of the foregoing incident the pilot was in command of a Boeing 757 aircraft. He prematurely powered up the aircraft's engines and began taxiing the aircraft while ground crew were still in dangerously close proximity to the aircraft. On Aug. 15, 2023, the pilot admitted under oath that this incident could have resulted in serious bodily injury to the ground crew."

Asia Pacific Airlines added that, significantly, this incident was witnessed by a Federal Aviation Administration safety director who expressed serious safety concerns to Asia Pacific Airlines regarding the pilot's reckless actions. Moreover, ground crew personnel described this incident as being extremely dangerous. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

MISS

From page 3

Living for People with Disabilities, and the Division of Youth Services.

She added that, in recognition of donors' generosity, the Miss Earth organization will promote and be acknowledge them through its platforms.

The deadline for the donations is on Dec. 17, the monetary donation can be sent through PayPal @HeavenlyPangelinan. You may contact (670)788-2700 for further information.

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THE PROVISIONS OF THE CPA PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION §40-50-1020 AND 1025 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CPA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF CPA.

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THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

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/S/ Francisco M. Rabauliman
SECRETARY, DCCA

/S/ Brien S. Nicholas, Jr.
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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EDITORIAL

Trump can make weight-loss drugs more affordable

President Joe Biden wants Medicare and Medicaid to cover weight-loss drugs, a proposal that would expand access to the costly but life-changing medications for millions of people who struggle with obesity. It's a good idea that Donald Trump should pursue when he's in office.

Medicare, which provides health care for more than 65 million seniors, is statutorily prohibited from covering weight-loss medications. Two decades ago, when Congress created the Part D benefit that pays for prescription drugs, obesity wasn't yet recognized as a disease. Some of the weight-loss drugs on the market weren't very effective, and others were dangerous.

Today, obesity is more commonly understood to be a chronic condition that affects more than 40% of the U.S. population. Medicaid, for its part, is already allowed to cover weight-loss drugs; Biden wants to require it.

The potential benefits of coverage are immense. Obesity is a risk factor in many of the nation's leading causes of death, including heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers. So-called GLP-1 drugs, first approved for diabetes in 2005, have become remarkably effective treatments for weight loss. They've also been shown to reduce the risk of heart attack, stroke and kidney disease, while researchers are investigating their potential to treat Alzheimer's and addiction, among other conditions.

Biden's proposal, worthy as it is, faces two challenges.

The first is cost. Novo Nordisk A/S's Wegovy and Eli Lilly & Co.'s Zepbound, two of the most effective drugs on the market, can retail for more than $1,000 a month. Though state Medicaid programs receive substantial discounts, most have balked at the potential expense. (GLP-1s need to be taken indefinitely.) Biden officials estimate that the plan, which would extend coverage to more than 7 million people, would increase federal spending by $36 billion over 10 years, net of rebates. States would be on the hook for $4 billion.

The other issue is procedural: Biden instructed the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to "reinterpret" the 2003 statute prohibiting coverage of weight-loss drugs "in recognition of the prevailing medical consensus that obesity is a disease." Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Trump's nominee for health secretary and a critic of weight-loss medications, may not agree. Assuming he gets on board, rulemaking could be tortuous and subject to legal challenges.

Neither problem should be a deal-breaker. For starters, it's plausible that the wide-ranging health benefits of weight-loss drugs could offset the costs long-term. Medicare's annual health-care spending for beneficiaries with the most severe category of obesity is roughly double the level of those who are of normal weight. But while savings estimates vary widely — partly because the drugs are so new and more studies must be done — several variables could improve those forecasts, including expanded eligibility, as well as increased effectiveness and adherence. Many people stop taking GLP-1s because they're simply unaffordable.

In the short run, a lower price is clearly needed. Germany pays about a tenth of the U.S. price for Wegovy; the U.K., even less. Like most rich countries, the U.S. has started negotiating prices with drugmakers for certain prescriptions covered by Medicare. Many expect Ozempic, Novo Nordisk's diabetes treatment that has the same active ingredient as Wegovy, will

See TRUMP on Page 7

POLL:
NEARLY 41% OF DEMOCRATS WANT TO HIT THEMSELVES IN THE HEAD WITH THE SAME HAMMER IN 2028.
KAMALA HARRIS
KIRK
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Truth 75: Institutional politics—government and Church 'a needed philosophical and theological message'

By AMBROSE M. BENNETT
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Ambrose M. Bennett is an economist who minored in sociology, political scientist, a retired teacher, and former CNMI Board of Education member, a James Madison Fellow (U.S. constitutional scholar), a Fulbright-Hays and lifetime humanities scholar who resides in Kagman III in the CNMI.

The truth of the matter is, someone must set the matter straight on our institutional politics which has been faltering for years, as it seems the people are finally starting to see and say they have had enough of the political gaslighting, deflecting and slight-of-hand poli-tricks when it comes to our leadership in government and now concerns rise in the Church's leadership. FYI readers, every institution in America has some form of institutional politics be it the government, education institutions, and now even the politics of the Church has become a major concern of the people. But I was truly glad to see MANGO taking steps to try and move forward and become part of the government's decision-making process, as they are the real experts, but we will have to wait and see if leaders do their part. The NGOs (non-government organizations) have been and still are the most important agents for the people when it comes to culture and combatting social deviancy and poverty—kudos MANGO and praying the lieutenant governor truly listened and will do their part!

Sometimes the truth hurts and I know some may not like nor want to hear this, but I must reiterate the truth that God does not make our political and church decisions—he judges them it's his job, which is why Bishop Camacho recruited me to stop the casino. We have God's teachings, and God will only watch and judge us later, as he only watches our choices and the results of our own good, bad or ugly decisions—this is the real deal! Now you know why we, the CNMI, is continuing to suffer so much from our own bad choices doing the same thing over and over expecting a different result electing Republicans for 30 straight years, and Arnold is a Republican too regardless of what's on his label. Now it's being exposed Arnold is raising the pay for a Republican lobbyist for taya—the Republican nepotism and favoritism poli-tricks and even raising his pay when we had and still have a delegate to lobby Congress for the CNMI—subterfuge in our faces continues. But I'm getting it now why God is keeping me around, at 73, to keep-it-up, as I'm truly needed to educate and help his people for a better CNMI. I think citizens need to be reminded that our government belongs to the people but if the people don't change and take real ownership in making demands to the government (protesting), which is American politics, then it's the same-o same-o for the past 30 years. Excluding me and Zaldy, only one local, like in Sodom and Gomorrah, has come forth recently to complain—a dun ka lu thanks to Peter Castro for fighting for the people.

However, the same phenomenon is taking place with the Church over the selection of our new bishop when God had nothing to do with it. The decision for our new bishop was made by ordinary men who surely already know God's teachings, but we also know that no one is perfect, not even our religious leaders. The founders' wisdom for America in the 85 *The Federalist Papers* that I have read gave us the only two keys to the two-doors for successful governing over people be it in government or any institution within our society, which includes the Church. Those two keys are simple to use as everyone can use them, which is being an informed and active citizen is the simple task it takes from us all to hold our government and the Church accountable to the people! All it takes for bad or evil to prevail is for the good men and women to do and say nothing. There was virtually no accountability nor oversight in our government and now for the Church. It is the fiduciary job of all the elected officials in the Legislature to place checks and balances on the governor yet that has failed to happen too many times in over 30 straight years in the CNMI. Ralph's subterfuge was so bad a judge is now calling for a federal investigation on his BOOST giveaway. Now Arnold's nepotism for Joe Palacios' when we need money!

FYI, I am also a Biblical scholar who used to write messages in the *North Star* that are now part of my latest religious book "Bits of Wisdom & Knowledge" on Amazon Books, and I can see the same problem with government that just took place within the church. But I can't be the only active citizen for the people on everything, as I can use some helo! After the previous oversight for a local bishop, I was actually expecting a petition to the Pope that I would have signed but it never came and it still doesn't exist. I think those complaining forget you must make the first step (petition) and then God can make two (touch their hearts). But no local who is complaining now took the leadership and started doing something to make sure a local priest was our new bishop and the same with our government. No informed and activeness thus we see the results. Complaining after the fact, when you had a chance to influence the decision beforehand proves our founders of America were soooo right in every aspect of institutional governing and leadership over the people.

FYI, I'm smelling an old political ploy used for years by Republicans who injected culture, as they even used culture to stop me when they couldn't even get new local words added to the vocabulary to stop the deterioration of the language and now culture has spilled over into the church. Get mad at the Republican's cultural affairs office for the past 30 years on language and culture issues but please not the Church, it's just wrong! Furthermore, it is the Church's single job to save souls, not languages and cultures, as there is a plethora of cultures within the Church. It's also God's church, not locals, as the church only conforms to language usage to accommodate the parishioners who only speak a specific language, as the Church needed to use the local languages in the past. But the preservation of the local languages and cultures is the sole individual responsibility of each local person, as there are many people in the church who are not local—for true! If every local did their part in promoting and preserving the culture, there wouldn't be complaints and placing it on the church.

Respectfully, locals must tread very carefully in promoting a biasness in favor of locals, which is not the purpose of the Church that works to save the souls in every culture, even those who don't speak the local languages! But I get the resentment,

See POLITICS on Page 7

Dems must educate 'low-information voters'

By THOMAS AVANT
Progressive Perspectives

Thomas Avant is a freelance journalist, government finance professional, and author of the 2020 book "Damaged People: Narcissism and the Foundation of a Dysfunctional American Society," available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

Many people are wondering: how is it that, in 2024, voters in the United States elected a twice-impeached convicted felon with multiple indictments in other cases—who led an insurrection to overthrow the U.S. government on January 6, 2021—to lead us again?

The answer is multi-layered, but there's no doubt that "low-information voters"—those who pay little attention to politics—were courted by Trump even more aggressively this time, and to great effect. Gaslighting, lies and disinformation have been a tactic of the Republican Party for years, but Trump and his team took this to new levels.

Certainly the case can be made that, if low-information voters had truly been voting for a better economy and their own self-interests, they would have cast their ballots for Kamala Harris, not Donald Trump. Instead, it was Trump's messaging that prevailed.

During his first term, Trump presided over the "deconstruction of the administrative state." This included, in 2018, disbanding the pandemic response unit established by President Barack Obama in the aftermath of the Ebola epidemic. Housed within the National Security Council, its purpose was to help prevent and mitigate global outbreaks of disease.

Two years later we experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to more than 400,000 deaths during Trump's administration. Trump's deregulation agenda, underplaying of the pandemic, unwillingness to implement federal mask and vaccine mandates, and stream of misinformation about the virus further spiraled the economy. That decline prolonged the pandemic and exacerbated an economic downturn that resulted in high inflation and supply chain issues across the globe.

While the Republicans blame President Joe Biden for inflation, supply shortages imposed by the pandemic and exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine war are ultimately to blame, as is corporate greed. Moreover, 16 Nobel Prize-winning economists have warned that Trump's promised tariff policies will increase inflation.

The American economy under Biden is, by all economic indicators, actually thriving, with low unemployment, rising wages and steep stock market gains. Low-information voters were played.

The modern Republican Party is the party of the wealthy and big business. It aims to reduce corporate income tax and income tax on the highest earning individuals, passing these costs on to the middle class and downsizing much-needed programs including Medicare and Social Security.

The national debt increased significantly during Trump's term in office, as it has under previous Republican presidents. That's because Republican administrations continue to spend, while lowering revenues by cutting taxes for high-earners and corporations. The national debt under Ronald Reagan rose by more than $1.6 trillion, or 160.8%; Trump added $6.7 trillion or 33.1% in his four years. Maybe that's why Republicans no longer talk about the national debt.

While it will take many years and a massive effort to inform and educate the low-information voter, the Democratic Party must begin now if it is to have any chance of success. The forces of dark money in politics, misinformation and disinformation, conspiracy theories, tribalism, vast ignorance and anti-intellectualism are stacked against us.

One thing is certain: if the Democratic Party doesn't revamp its messaging strategy, it will continue to suffer at the polls, and the country will continue its downward slide toward authoritarianism and dysfunction. The Democratic establishment must give way to new ideas on how to educate working-class and low-information voters.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Oppose conditions of Coral Ocean Resort land lease

Hafa Adai Gov. Palacios and Attorney General Manibusan,

On behalf of Matua Council for Native Chamorro Advancement, we bring to your attention that we oppose some of the conditions and provisions enumerated in the 55 years lease agreement for the Coral Ocean Resort under the Executive Branch—the Department of Public Lands including the Joint Standing Committee Report 23-1 by the members of the 23rd Legislature for the Suwaso Corp., dba Coral Ocean Resort, and Micronesia Resort, Inc.

Accordingly, this new 55 years lease agreement, which is a rollover of another 40 years plus a renewal rights of 15 years totaling 55 years will provide a continued exclusive use of our indigenous Chamorro lands to the lessee totaling 95 years or since 1986 without any guarantee to ensure the greatest benefits to the beneficiaries of the landowners of these properties.

As you understand there is no mention in the conditions or provisions in this lease agreement to ensure the greatest protection and preservation of our sacred heritage site at i Sengsong Agingan-Unai Dangkulu that hosts the golf course and resort. These are the Achu Latti-Latte Stone quarry sites, the Sengsong settlement and Naftan burial sites, and the chopchup unai-matingat coastal access sites where we exercise our native gathering rights. These were not specifically mentioned in any section of the entire lease agreement nor in the DPL documents or the Legislative documents or in any of the legislative journals to ensure that we have access to our sacred ancestral sites of i Taotao Tanu' for our continued survival as indigenous of these lands.

Additionally, there is no provision or condition in the lease agreement to ensure or guarantee employment opportunities for the natives, especially, in management positions and professional skills jobs; nor any provision or condition for reasonable access and accommodations such as sustainable green fee and guarantee daily slots reserved at the golf course and facilities for the beneficiaries—golf players or the establishment of a golf academy for the famagu'on students, Man Hoben youth and young adults, or for our Man Amku senior citizens.

Here are the binding provisions why we oppose the current proposed lease agreement because it failed to provide assurance to ensure the greatest protection in the management and disposition of our land in the next 55 years in this new lease.

The proposed appraised value of the land, and policy pertaining to the standard and method of calculation of the land value.

The appraisal report should not be reliant on only one appraisal report. More importantly, it is biased because the report was done for the lessee's contractor, who is the same appraiser being utilized by the lessor, at the same time the appraiser also sits as member of the professional licensing board.

The inclusion of 2,000 plus square meters of public access in the lease agreement needs to be removed from the lease because this directly impedes our access to our gathering rights for food and medicine for our continued survival, including our sacred gathering space to pay tribute and homage of our ancestors gave sites.

The decision of DPL to negotiate this proposed lease at this time given the economic conditions in the Northern Marianas, our neighboring countries, and the U.S., that are nearing economic recession.

The proposed lessee, COR, has failed their promise and agreement to maintain the adjacent coastal areas of the current Suwaso-COR golf course. This site for many years has been left littered, the coastal areas are infested with rodents and stray animals because of unattended garbage and lack of maintenance of the sites, overgrown grass, trees and shrubs leaving this sensitive cultural and historical site vulnerable to brush fires and has had brush fire to settlement site; the pavilions are in a state of disrepair; the bathroom is never available to the public since after the ribbon cutting of the pavilion over a decade ago.

Unai Dangkulu, Sengsong Agingan coastal site has consistently been neglected compromising our critical cultural and historical resources at risk of destruction of our irreplaceable and invaluable heritage of the ancestral Taotao Tano of i Sengsong Agingan, the Rebellion of 1660s or the Chamorro-Spanish War of 1668-1690s, including the significance and invaluable historic remnants from the World War II.

More importantly, we oppose this land lease since the Department of Public Lands failed to provide several engaging and suitable public hearings on Sa'ipan, Tini'an, and Luta for the beneficiaries of these lands to receive their comments. The public notice in the local newspaper does not give the beneficiaries an opportunity to be included in the decision-making process that concerns over half-a-million square meters of trust land because it is grossly insufficient and an injustice to the beneficiaries. This notice venue does not provide nor allow the beneficiaries to be engaged in the decision-making process on the management and disposition of their heritage and resources, land is one.

To this end, the CNMI government needs to repeal any rules, regulations and public laws that exploits the intent and spirit of the Covenant agreement in political union with the United States of America in the management and disposition of trust lands transferred by the U.S. under the auspice of the United Nations in care of the CNMI government. Both Public Law 15-2 and P.L. 20-84 are exploitative in the management and disposition of our native lands.

The U.S. Inspector General needs to revisit its 1994 report to this effect because our land, our ocean, our groundwater, and our airspace have been exploited to unlimited proportions. This is not what the framers of the Covenant envisioned for "the people of the Northern Mariana Islands" when they forged their signatures 49 years ago.

Yet, to date majority of the beneficiaries of these resources are living in poverty level, unemployed, dispossessed of their homestead lands, over 1,300 homestead applicants are waiting for their land, while thousands more were dispossessed of their homestead lands, drinking water is toxic, beaches are contaminated from unregulated pollutions, and the air quality is impacted by the lack of public polices to ensure minimal impact.

In closing, we urge Secretary Santos to take our opposition to this lease and seek an open dialogue with us and the rest of the beneficiaries both here in the NMI and those abroad because we are the owners of the land at Unai Dangkulu, Sengsong Agingan for over 3,500 years. As descendants of Sengsong Agingan, we are still here!

Again, on behalf of Matua Council we humbly seek your utmost attention to this important matter. And we thank you in advance for your consideration of our request. We look forward to hearing from you of the same. Should you need additional information, clarification or have any questions please email us at chamorrocouncil@gmail.com.

Liana M.S. Hofschneider
Matua Council for Native Chamorro Advancement president

TRUMP

From page 6

be on the list next year. Trump should encourage these deals to continue while retaining appropriate protections for the stream of innovators entering the market that will be exempt from negotiations under certain conditions. The administration should also consider incorporating other countries' prices in its dealmaking.

Finally, Congress should pass proposed legislation that would authorize coverage of weight-loss drugs for Medicare beneficiaries with obesity and certain beneficiaries classified as overweight. The proposal would also expand access to clinicians who can provide behavioral therapy, as medication alone is unlikely to be sufficient. Diet and exercise likewise must remain central to the obesity battle.

If Trump wants to improve Americans' health, as he says, expanding coverage of weight-loss drugs should be a priority. With better prices, and support from Congress, adopting Biden's proposal will save money and lives.

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POLITICS

From page 6

however, locals allowed it to happen, as nothing was done to make sure a local was appointed—duh! We must respect and accept the decision and/or formally protest through a petition to the Pope. At least there is public oversight with the Church but not with our political leaders, only me and Zaldy. But please don't get upset at the Church leaders, as we can only pray for these ordinary men who may have made an honest oversight like we have all done at one time or another. The focus might have been more on qualifications in the decision than on the need for a local bishop, as I'm sure the appointed one is surely qualified. But it was your job citizens to be an active and informed citizen for the results you desired be it within the church or government. But parishioners did nothing and complaining after the fact is too little too late! So don't forget the two keys for successful governance being an informed and active citizen" for a better CNMI and a local bishop for the Church. God bless and Godspeed CNMI!

A non-profit organization run by and for persons with disabilities

Center for Living Independently in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
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The CNMI Comes Together to Support the Disability Community on all 3 islands!

The Center for Living Independently in the CNMI (CLI-CNMI) is proud to announce the successful delivery of the Food Pantry Program to the disability communities in the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. This was made possible by funding from the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation CDBG-CV grant through the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This initiative provided essential food supplies, including cases of chicken and ribs, 40 lbs. of rice, and milk, to eligible individuals with disabilities ages 18 and above within the community.

The project not only delivered crucial resources to those is need but also fostered new partnerships within the community. CLI-CNMI had the opportunity to meet both familiar faces and new members, highlighting the collaborative spirit of the initiative. This success would not have been possible without the generous support of several key partners:

- **Guam/Saipan Seabridge:** Special thanks to Mr. Gary Iribarren, Chris Santos, and Michelle Tomokane for providing the Triton vessel to transport goods from Saipan to Rota, as well as a barge vessel for transporting supplies from Saipan to Tinian with all fees waived!
- **Saipan Shipping:** We extend our gratitude to Mrs. Darlene Cabrera and Leeandra Palacios for their invaluable assistance with logistics and moving cargo with all fees waived!
- **American Presidential Line (APL)**: Mr. Jack Scoggin and his dedicated team provided a reefer container that ensured the safe transportation of food supplies to Rota – all fees waived!
- **MATSON:** A special thank you to Mrs. Marites Yumul and her team for providing a reefer container for Tinian. **All fees waived!**
- **Saipan Stevedore:** Mr. Lee Cabrera ensured the safe loading and unloading of precious cargo and securing of containers for transport. In addition, Tinian distribution was made successful with Saipan Stevedore Tinian Representative John Acosta and his crew. All fees waived!
- **Construction & Material Supply, Inc. (CMS):** Mr. Jose Tenorio and his team provided timely trucking assistance, ensuring the food reached its destination without delay. All fees waived!
- **Joeten Wholesale:** A heartfelt thank you to Melanie Castro, Gemma Villanueva, and the Joeten Wholesale team for their incredible support in providing the necessary resources and supplies.

We also want to recognize **Mr. Fidel Mendiola** of Rota for his significant role in unloading the container from the vessel and assisting with transporting supplies to the distribution site, not to forget reloading the containers back on the ship. In addition, CLI-CNMI wants to recognize Ms. **Connie Concepcion Ulloa** from Office of Aging Rota for her zealous efforts to assist the Rota manam'ko congregates. You are AMAZING!!

Our sincere gratitude goes to **Madame Mayor Aubry Mendiola** of Rota and her incredible team for their ongoing support of the disability community on the island, not to forget allowing us to use their office space to make copies and so much more. We would also like to formally thank Madame Mayor Aubry Mendiola for giving CLI a place to call home on Rota in the Mayor's building.

We are also deeply thankful to the **Tinian Mayor's Office** staff for allowing us to use their office space to meet with and assist individuals with disabilities during the food pantry application and planning process. A special thank you to the **Tinian Women's Association** for their outstanding support and assistance during the food distribution on Tinian. You all ROCK!

CLI remains committed to supporting the disability community across the CNMI. This Food Pantry program is just the beginning of many more initiatives to come. Together, we are making a difference and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Together, we can make a difference!

Saipan Community Church Christmas Feast this Sunday

Saipan Community Church will be having its 2024 Christmas Feast this Sunday, Dec. 15, starting at 4pm with presentations from various groups like Saipan Community School and San Vicente Elementary School and culminating with SCC's Choir Cantata.

SCC senior pastor Stephen Dame said the 2024 Christmas Feast is the church's gift to the community this Christmas and is inviting everyone to the totally free event.

"The Saipan Community Church's Christmas Feast is one of our many ways we give back to our community. Each of the last two years, the Christmas Feast has drawn in excess of 600 attendees who are fed well and given an evening of entertainment."

Dame said the Christmas Feast has been SCS' signature annual event for around 40 years.

"The Christmas Feast gives everyone a chance to share distinct cultural food dishes as well as local favorites. In addition to the food, there will be performances by the Saipan Community School and San Vicente Elementary School Glee Club and other local artists. We are thrilled that so many get to share together and experience the true reason for the celebration of Christmas. All are welcome!"

Saipan Community Church, the CNMI's oldest protestant church having been founded in 1947, is located along Beach Road across from the Mobil gas station in Susupe. ***(PR)***

SCS

Scenes from Saipan Community Church's 2023 Christmas Feast last year.

HAPPY 58TH BIRTHDAY

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Beautiful (inside and out), Radiant (nothing but positive vibes), Empathic (constantly caring for others), Natural nurturer (period!), Dependable (always), and Amazing (obviously)! These are just a few of the words that we can use to describe you, Mom Brenda. You made it, so that we could make it too! From growing up in the jungles of Palau, working in the different fields of plantation, walking everywhere because you didn't grow up with a car, hand-sewing your own clothes, taking care of the elderly, etc., to now, 2024—living on Saipan for over 40 years. A survivor of domestic violence, a single warrior mother to five, grandmother to three, and the Queen of our Hearts. Witnessing your strength all these years gave us the motivation to be strong too! The life that your five kids are living now is a testimony to your unwavering faith in God, Our Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. 'Tis the season and He is the reason—you taught us that mom. You have sacrificed so much for us all our lives, and we thank you infinitely. First, we would like to Thank God and Jesus Christ for another year of life; second, we would like to ask God and Jesus Christ for another year of blessings, guidance, and protection over you. Lastly, happy 58th birthday Mom! We all love you more than words can say, and we are grateful to God for choosing you to be our mom! With lots of love from your children—Georenda "Tal" and Perry (Ny'elle and PerryBoy); Geovany "Bun" and Dora (Greyson); Geovanly "Moche," George Jr. "Omkang," Geosly "Ngitong," and Rochelle. ***(PR)***

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/

Happy birthday John Oliver Cirera. May you have many more birthdays to come. Greetings from your Himawari family.

NOTICE OF CLOSURE
CGD EASY CASH PAWNSHOP

PLEASE BE INFORMED that effective March 14, 2025, our business operations with cease. Please visit our location so we can assist you with your pawned items.

Thank you for your patronage.

In Loving Memory of
†PHILOMENA ITERONG
KEKERELCHAD ICHIRO
January 2, 1936 - December 3, 2024
Predeceased:
Husband: †Tetsuo Ichiro
Daughter: †Laila Ichiro
Mother: †Mertii Omkang
Father: †Kekerelchad Bedul
Brothers and Sisters: †Kimiko Techur
†Teiko Merur,
†Klewei Kekerelchad
†Iwong Alexander
†Kitang Sibetang
†Elchang Yano
†Satsko Ysaol
Survive by:
Sisters: Erchar Joseph
Virginia Kekerelchad
Kebesuul Kekerelchad
Son:
Ivan Kitalong Ichiro & Elizabeth (Betty) Dlg Ichiro (Darrel Dlg Salas & Sunshine Lee Salas and Kayli Ari Salas, Kaycee Ava Salas, Kayven Avery Salas); Brian Dlg Salas, Jaclyn Dlg & Craig Salas (Jared Salas); Lynette Dlg Ichiro (Brandon), Laila Philomena Dlg Ichiro; Ivan Jr Tetsuo Dlg Ichiro
She is additionally survived by numerous cousins, nephews, and nieces.
The funeral service will be held on December 14th, 2024 at San Roque Parish, with a viewing from 9 to 10 am, followed by Mass at 10 am. Interment will take place at Tanapag Cemetery.
Thank You and Si Yu'us Maase and Kom Kmal Mesulang.
From the Family

ANTONIO SN. BORJA, Chairman — HENRY H. SAN NICOLAS, Vice Chairman
DONALD M. HOFSCHNEIDER, Member — CHARLENE M. LIZAMA, Executive Director

TINIAN CASINO GAMING CONTROL COMMISSION

Municipality of Tinian and Aguiguan
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9910(a), the Tinian Casino Gaming Control Commission (TCGCC) hereby gives notice that it will hold its Regular Meeting on Wednesday, December 18, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. at the TCGCC Conference Room.

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY
  a. Call to Order
  b. Roll Call
  c. Adoption of Agenda
  d. Adoption of Minutes
    1. November 12, 2024 – Regular Meeting
II. PUBLIC COMMENTS[1]
III. REPORTS
  a. Chair's Report
  b. Executive Director's Report
IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS
  a. Status Update of Bridge Investment Group/Tinian Diamond Casino
V. NEW BUSINESS
  a. Bridge Investment Group's Annual Casino License Fee
  b. Legal Counsel's Contract
  c. ED Recommendation No. 2025-02
VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION[2]
VII. OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS
VIII. MISCELLANEOUS AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
IX. ADJOURNMENT

[1] *Public comments are limited to 30 minutes and each remark is limited to 3 minutes. Everyone is welcome to submit written comments.*
[2] *Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9912, the Commission may vote to meet in executive session at any time.*

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Attorneys for Plaintiffs

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

RICHELLE CABRERA BORJA and E. J. B. T. (Minor Child) Plaintiffs, v. EUGENIO N. TENORIO Defendant.	]	**FCD-PA CIVIL ACTION NO. 24-0336**
	]	**NOTICE OF HEARING TO THE AMENDED PETITION TO INCLUDE MOTION TO TERMINATE PARENTAL RIGHTS AS TO DEFENDANT EUGENIO NAPUTI TENORIO**
	]	**NEXT DATE: JANUARY 22, 2025**
	]	**TIME: 1:30 PM**
	]	**JUDGE: KIM-TENORIO**

TO: THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND EUGENIO N. TENORIO

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that on **January 22, 2025,** at **1:30 p.m.,** a hearing will be held before Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio on Plaintiffs Amended Petition Motion to Terminate Parental Rights as to Defendant Eugenio N. Tenorio.

Dated this 10th day of December 2024.

/s/_____
Clerk of Court/Deputy Clerk of Court

MICHAEL A. WHITE, ESQ, F-0122
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ATTORNEY FOR Petitioner

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In re Estate of GERARD ANTHONY REYES REYES, Deceased,	]	CIVIL ACTION NO. 24-0274

NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Cirgida Dorisciana Ghann has filed a Petition for Letters of Administration upon the Estate of Gerard Anthony Reyes Reyes, deceased; and that the said Petition will be heard by the Court on **THURSDAY**, January 16, 2025, **at the hour of 10:00 a.m.**

Notice is also given to all heirs of and persons having claims against the Estate of Gerard Anthony Reyes Reyes, deceased, and to all persons claiming an interest in said Estate, that they shall file such claims with the Clerk of this Court within sixty (60) days from the date of the first publication of this Notice. Copies of such claims should be provided to Michael A. White, Esq., The Law Offices of Michael A. White, LLC, P.O. Box 5222 CHRB, Saipan, MP 96950. The failure to file a timely claim by a creator will bar that claim.

DATED: 10 DEC 2024

/S/_____
JOSEPH N. CAMACHO, Associate Judge

World

UN General Assembly demands ceasefire in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS (AP)— The U.N. General Assembly overwhelmingly approved resolutions Wednesday demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and backing the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees that Israel has moved to ban.

The votes in the 193-nation world body were 158-9, with 13 abstentions to demand a ceasefire now and 159-9 with 11 abstentions in support of the agency known as UNRWA.

The votes culminated two days of speeches overwhelmingly calling for an end to the 14-month war between Israel and the militant Hamas group and demanding access throughout Gaza to address the growing humanitarian catastrophe.

Israel and its close ally, the United States, were in a tiny minority speaking and voting against the resolutions. Other opposing both resolutions included Argentina, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay and Tonga.

While Security Council resolutions are legally binding, General Assembly resolutions are not, though they do reflect world opinion. There are no vetoes in the assembly.

The Palestinians and their supporters went to the General Assembly after the U.S. vetoed a Security Council resolution on Nov. 20 demanding an immediate Gaza ceasefire. It was supported by the council's 14 other members but the U.S. objected that it was not linked to an immediate release of hostages taken by Hamas militants during their attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, which triggered the war.

The Palestinian U.N. Ambassador Riyad Mansour expressed gratitude for the overwhelming support for both resolutions Wednesday, saying the votes "reflect the resolve and the determination of the international community."

"We will keep knocking on the doors of the Security Council and the General Assembly until we see an immediate and unconditional ceasefire put in place and until we see humanitarian assistance being distributed at scale in all corners of the Gaza Strip," he said.

The language of the resolution adopted by the assembly on a ceasefire mirrors the text of the vetoed council resolution. It demands "an immediate, unconditional and permanent cease-fire to be respected by all parties," while also reiterating a "demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages."

That language is much stronger than General Assembly resolutions adopted on Oct. 27, 2023 – three weeks after the Hamas attack – calling for an immediate and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities and on Dec. 12, 2023, demanding "an immediate humanitarian ceasefire."

The resolution adopted Wednesday also marked the first time Germany and Italy, who abstained last December, voted in favor of a Gaza ceasefire. Their support left the United States as the only member of the Group of 7 major industrialized nations still opposed.

On the humanitarian front, the resolution rejects "any effort to starve Palestinians" and demands immediate access to civilians to provide aid indispensable to their survival.

The second resolution backs the mandate of UNRWA, which was established by the General Assembly in 1949.

It deplores laws adopted by Israel's parliament on Oct. 28 banning UNRWA's activities in the Palestinian territories, a measure to take effect in 90 days.

It reiterates U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' statements that UNRWA is "the backbone" of all humanitarian operations in Gaza and no organization can replace it. And it reaffirms the necessity for UNRWA's continued "unimpeded operation."

The resolution calls on the Israeli government "to abide by its international obligations, respect the privileges and immunities of UNRWA" and uphold its responsibility to facilitate the unhindered delivery of aid humanitarian assistance throughout the entire Gaza Strip.

Israel alleges that around a dozen of UNRWA's 13,000 workers in Gaza participated in Hamas' attacks on Israel that precipitated the war. It recently provided the U.N. with over 100 names of UNRWA staff it accuses of having militant ties.

U.S. deputy U.N. ambassador Robert Wood reiterated America's opposition to the ceasefire resolution ahead of Wednesday's vote and criticized the Palestinians for again failing to mention Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

"At a time when Hamas is feeling isolated due to the ceasefire in Lebanon, the draft resolution on a ceasefire in Gaza risks sending a dangerous message to Hamas that there's no need to negotiate or release the hostages," he said.

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

PROJECT NO. CPA-RFP-009-25
SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 14, 2025 (4:00 P.M.)

"AIRPORT BUSINESS AND FINANCE CONSULTANT"

THE BID PACKAGE AND OTHER CONTRACT CONSIDERATIONS IS AVAILABLE FOR PICK UP BEGINNING DECEMBER 13, 2024 AT THE ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT, COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY, 2ND FLOOR, DEPARTURE BUILDING, FRANCISCO C. ADA/SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT UPON PAYMENT OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE FEE OF $100. PAYMENT SHALL BE MADE IN CASH, CASHIER'S CHECK, CREDIT CARD, OR U.S. POSTAL MONEY ORDER. ALL APPLICANTS SHALL PAY THE $100.00 TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE BID.

BIDDERS ARE TO SUBMIT ONE (1) ORIGINAL AND TWO (2) COPIES IN A SEALED ENVELOPE AND MARKED "AIRPORT BUSINESS AND FINANCE CONSULTANT (RFP-009-25)" TO THE OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 2ND FLOOR, ARRIVAL BUILDING, FRANCISCO C. ADA/SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON OR BEFORE 4:00 P.M., JANUARY 14, 2025. BIDDERS SHALL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATIONS ALL CHARGES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROCUREMENT BEFORE FINALIZING ITS BID PRICE.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CPA PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION §40-50-1020 AND 1025 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CPA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF CPA.

FREDERICK PANGELINAN
ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DATE: DECEMBER 13, 2024

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
Main Office: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
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P.O. BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP 96950
Phone: (670) 237-6500/1 • Fax: (670) 234-5962
Website: www.cnmiports.com

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS

FRANCISCO C. ADA/SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
RUNWAY REHABILITATION REPACKAGING PROJECT
PROJECT NO. CPA-SA-004-20 (AIP PENDING)

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS
FOR
SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT FACILITATOR

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, CPA is seeking statements of qualifications from qualified and experienced firms (individually or collectively) to provide professional consulting services for Safety Risk Management (SRM) facilitation support, in conjunction with the upcoming Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport Runway Rehabilitation Repackaging Project, No. CPA-SA-004-20 (AIP pending).

The project is being funded by U.S. Federal Aviation Administration and is in accordance and compliance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations, Section 40-50-202, Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) Package is available at CPA's Administration Office, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. No fee is required for obtaining the RFQ package. Electronic copies may be made available upon written request to Ms. Wendi Prater, CPA's CIP Administrator, at wprater@cnmiports.com.

Questions regarding this solicitation must be submitted to Ms. Wendi L. Prater via the email address above or may be hand delivered to the CPA Administration Office by no later than 5:00 p.m. CHST, Friday, December 13, 2024.

The statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria available in the RFQ package.

Interested Consultants are requested to submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf of their statements of professional qualifications no later than **5:00 p.m. CHST, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2024.** It is preferable that statements of qualification be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

/s/ LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

Date: November 15, 2024

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Director

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
CUC-RFP-25-010
FINANCIAL AND COMPLIANCE AUDIT FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025, 2026 & 2027

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) requires the services of a U.S. Certified Public Accounting Firm/Individual with knowledge, skill, and experience in auditing (1) financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and auditing standards of the U.S. and; (2) federal awards programs in accordance with the Single Audit Act and U.S. Office of Management and Budget requisites

- Provide assistance to the CUC management with the preparation of the annual financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America
- Ensure that the financial statements and auditor's reports also meet any specific requirements contained in agreements or other contractual requirements relative to financial statement presentation and the audits.
- Submit the draft financial statements and accompanying auditor's reports to CUC management no later than January 31st of each year, and issue the final reports no later than February 28th of each year.
- Provide 15 bound copies of the final financial statements and accompanying auditor's report
- Provide an electronic copy (e.g., .pdf format) of the final report to the CUC.

Auditors are responsible to review the 2025, 2026 & 2027 financial statements to include the physical CUC assets for each fiscal year.

The RFP package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one RFP package set.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies, along with an electronic copy of the proposal on a compact disk in PDF format must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked ***"CUC-RFP-25-010, Financial and Compliance Audit for Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2025, 2026 & 2027"*** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **January 10, 2025 at 10:00 AM** (ChST). Submissions, in PDF, must also be emailed to the addresses as noted in the RFP. Late submissions and conditional proposals will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. Offerors shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity to discussion and revision of proposals, and such revision may be permitted after submission and prior to award for the purpose of obtaining the best and final offers. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing offerors.

All Offeror are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Offeror due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the proposal under this request, or to procure or contract for services. Offeror are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 20, 2024** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Betty G. Terlaje, CUC Chief Financial Officer, via email address betty.terlaje@cucgov.org,, Rodolfo Urbano, CUC Chief Accountant via email, rodolfo.urbano@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, via email address, marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

KEVIN O. WATSON
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Life & Style

2024 IN POP CULTURE:
In bruising year, we sought out fantasy, escapism–and cute little animals

By JOCELYN NOVECK
AP NATIONAL WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—I'll get you, my pretty! And your little pygmy hippo, too!

Forgive us the shameless attempt to link the fantasy hit "Wicked" to the delightful Moo Deng. But, hear us out—there's something the two have in common as the year draws to a close. Escapism. Whether we found it on the yellow brick road, or in videos from a Thailand zoo, or perhaps in unlikely Olympic heroes, we gravitated toward fantasy and feel-good pop culture moments this year.

There were new trends, as always. "Brat summer" became a thing, as did "demure, mindful." And for some inexplicable reason, we became obsessed with celebrity lookalike contests.

There were breakups—Bennifer is, again, a thing of the past—and reunions: Oasis, please try to stay together for the tour. And some things stayed, remarkably, the same: Taylor Swift and Beyoncé kept on breaking records and making history.

So, after a year where much changed but some things held steady, here's our annual, very selective trip down pop culture memory lane:

January

It starts as a cheery tweet from a beloved "Sesame Street" figure: "ELMO is just checking in! How is everybody doing?" The answers hint at something deeper and more worrisome. "Not great, Elmo. Not great," says one milder reply. Doing much better is the viral phenomenon called "BARBENHEIMER," which makes its awards season debut at the GOLDEN GLOBES. But perhaps the most poignant moment comes from neither film: LILY GLADSTONE, first Indigenous winner of best actress in a drama for "Killers of the Flower Moon," begins her remarks in the language of her tribe, Blackfeet Nation.

February

Valentine's Day—a perfect time to settle into a sweet love saga via TikTok. Only that's not quite what we get with "Who TF Did I Marry?," REESA TEESA's depressing, fascinating, 50-part account of her disastrous marriage with a man who lied about absolutely everything. Meanwhile, if you're looking for a single week that encapsulates peak SWIFT cultural dominance, try this: she begins with the Grammys in Los Angeles (becoming the first artist to win album of the year four times AND announcing a new album), then heads to Tokyo for four tour dates, then jets back just in time for the Super Bowl in Las Vegas—where she shares a passionate smooch with boyfriend TRAVIS KELCE on the field of victory.

March

"What was I made for?" BILLIE EILISH sings at the OSCARS, channeling BARBIE. And what was KEN made for? Not entirely clear—but it's clear RYAN GOSLING was made to play him. His singalong version of "I'm Just Ken" is one of the most entertaining Oscar musical moments in years. Still, Christopher Nolan's "OPPENHEIMER" prevails, a rare case of the top prize going to a blockbuster studio film. Will it happen again in 2025? CYNTHIA ERIVO and ARIANA GRANDE sure hope so; as presenters, they make a sly reference to their upcoming juggernaut, "WICKED." Speaking of marketing, people are obsessed with that bizarre "DUNE" popcorn bucket. And BEYONCÉ carves her space in country music with "Act II: Cowboy Carter," which will make her the first Black woman to top the Billboard country chart.

April

Tennis, anyone? The game's been around for centuries, but it's having a cultural moment right now, helped mightily by "CHALLENGERS," the sweaty romance triangle starring ZENDAYA, MIKE FAIST and JOSH O'CONNOR (40-love? More like 40-sex.) Elsewhere, a new era dawns: At midnight, SWIFT drops "THE TORTURED POETS DEPARTMENT," then drops another 15 songs two hours later. The fascinating and disturbing "BABY REINDEER," the story of a struggling comedian's extended encounter with a stalker, debuts on Netflix.

May

It's MET GALA time—or as it's known in 2024, another early marketing moment for "WICKED." ERIVO and GRANDE make fashion waves on the carpet and then musical ones at dinner, with a soulful performance of "When You Believe." If the "Wicked" tour is in full force, another one stops in its tracks: JENNIFER LOPEZ cancels her summer tour amid reports of both poor ticket sales and trouble in her marriage to BEN AFFLECK. It's been an eventful year for J.Lo, who's released an album and movie called "THIS IS ME ... NOW" —both reflections on her renewed love with Affleck.

June

Welcome to BRAT SUMMER! CHARLI XCX releases her hit "Brat" album, with its lime green cover, and launches a thousand memes. Collins Dictionary defines "brat," its word of the year, as "characterized by a confident, independent, and hedonistic attitude." At the celeb-heavy SWIFT shows in London, we see PRINCE WILLIAM shaking it off, which is either charming or cringe, you decide. Even better: KELCE dons a top hat and tux and performs for one night. At another stadium across the pond, METS infielder JOSE IGLESIAS delights the crowd with his cheery number "OMG."

July

Bonjour, it's OLYMPICS time! In Paris! An audacious opening ceremony along the Seine is punctuated by a fabulous CELINE DION, perched on the EIFFEL TOWER, singing her heart out—in the rain, too. Controversy swirls over a scene critics feel mocks Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" (organizers say it does not). Olympic stars are born—including French swimming superstar LEON MARCHAND, rugby player ILONA MAHER, and bespectacled "pommel horse guy" gymnast STEPHEN NEDOROSCIK, who nets two bronze medals and comparisons to Clark Kent. Also capturing hearts: yep, MOO DENG, born this month. Her name means "bouncy pork."

August

This is them ... now: BENNIFER is no more. After two decades, two engagements and two weddings, J.Lo files for divorce. One union dissolves, another returns: OASIS announces a reunion tour. Will they be "DEMURE, MINDFUL"? Everyone seems to want to get in on TikToker JOOLS LEBRON'S act—even the WHITE HOUSE press team. Back at the Olympics, in the new sport of breaking, we meet Australia's RAYGUN, arguably neither demure nor mindful with her "kangaroo" move. Cute animal alert: It's DECOY OHTANI's Major League debut! SHOHEI OHTANI's perky pooch does a great "first pitch."

September

One of the year's biggest breakout artists, CHAPPELL ROAN, withdraws from a music festival after speaking out about frightening fan interactions. And more on the price of fame: In an excruciating moment, "Bachelorette" JENN TRAN, the franchise's first Asian American lead, is forced to sit through a painful viewing of her proposal to her chosen suitor, after tearfully explaining how he'd later dumped her over the phone. Tran is keeping busy though—she's announced as part of the new "Dancing with the Stars" lineup. Also on the list: rugby player Maher, and Pommel Horse Guy! Also, ANNA SOROKIN, dancing with an ankle monitor. Online fandom, meanwhile, is shaken when X is temporarily suspended in Brazil and celebrity stan accounts post tearful farewells, revealing to many across the globe that their favorite accounts are run by Brazilians.

October

"Dune" Chalamets! "Wonka" Chalamets! Thousands gather in Manhattan for a TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET lookalike contest, and things really get interesting when Chalamet himself shows up. He doesn't enter the contest, though, and with his mustache, he may not even have won. The trend continues with contests for JEREMY ALLEN WHITE, ZAYN MALIK, and—in a very Washington version—Kennedy scion JACK SCHLOSSBERG, who's been gathering a following with some interesting social media posts. Turning to basketball, who's that dancing with USHER? Why it's ELLIE THE ELEPHANT, the now-viral NEW YORK LIBERTY mascot.

November

MAYA RUDOLPH does a pretty good KAMALA HARRIS laugh on "Saturday Night Live," but you know who does it better? HARRIS herself. The Democratic candidate makes a surprise cameo three days before the U.S. presidential election, following in the footsteps of HILLARY CLINTON, SARAH PALIN and others. Elsewhere in television, Bravo announces that "VANDERPUMP RULES," the Emmy-nominated reality show that has lived through countless scandals, is entirely recasting its 12th season—apart from namesake LISA VANDERPUMP. As for MOO DENG, she doesn't have her own TV series yet, but our favorite pygmy hippo is generating plenty of merch. And THAT brings us back to ….

December

"WICKED"! Director JON M. CHU'S emerald-hued fantasy remains very very popular, to quote one of its buzzy show tunes, dancing through life and defying gravity at the multiplex. Moviegoers also come for "GLADIATOR II" and, in a veritable tidal wave, Disney's "MOANA 2," which beckons us back to the seas of Oceania. Once again, 2024 seems to be telling us: Give people some whimsy, a place to escape, maybe some catchy tunes — and no one knows how far they'll go.

Defeated husband has fallen into a downward spiral

DEAR ABBY: My husband is miserable. Five years ago, he was fired from his job of more than 25 years, and the small issues he had with depression, alcohol and smoking have multiplied exponentially. He sleeps until 10 or 11 a.m., showers only two or three times a week, rarely eats and has a drink in his hand by 4 or 5 p.m. every day. He now suffers from COPD but has no plans to quit smoking. He would never consider therapy.

My husband has lost so much weight and muscle mass, he's barely recognizable. He seems to miss sex, but even if he made an advance, his lack of physicality would make it miserable. Anyway, I'm no longer interested. He was never an affectionate person, but now he has poor personal hygiene, his breath smells of liquor and his hands smell of tobacco.

Beyond the quiet misery of home, it's tough for him to go out. He has a hard time with stairs, walking very far and even ordering from a restaurant. I feel he is trying to hasten his own death. I honestly feel there is nothing I can do that I haven't already done. I'm fine, but numb. Do you have any advice for me?

HOPELESS IN KANSAS

DEAR HOPELESS: Your husband seems to feel he has nothing to live for. You mentioned that he seems to miss sex but is now in such bad shape that you are no longer interested. Have you told him the reason you are no longer interested is that he's no longer the person you fell in love with, and a giant step in the right direction would be for him to consult his doctor about his depression? If the answer is no, consider offering him that "carrot." If he's willing to try to get back on track, you might feel differently.

There are nicotine substitutes for the truly addicted, which help users inhale fewer damaging byproducts. People with COPD can get some exercise with the help of supplemental oxygen, a subject that should also be discussed with his doctor. That said, the bottom line is your husband has to WANT to help himself. If he doesn't, it may be time for you to locate the nearest Al-Anon group (al-anon.org/info) and attend some meetings, which will help you to recognize that his self-destructive behavior is not your responsibility and only he can help himself.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: A longtime friend is now a widow and doesn't have time to connect anymore. I have invited her for coffee and for dinner and sent notes of support. She waits days, even weeks to respond and has other social things to do. I understand loss and grief, but this feels like "NO. Go away," with a stiff arm. I guess it's time to go away. Right?

UNEXPECTED IN INDIANA

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR UNEXPECTED: You may have been overwhelming this woman in your attempt to comfort her. Depending on how long ago she lost her husband, it may be better for you to step back and allow her to regain her balance. The more you push her, the further she will distance herself.

■■■■

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

DAD, IF YOU THREW A SNOWBALL AT SOMEONE, BUT DELIBERATELY MISSED, WOULD THAT BE "BAD"?
WELL, I SUPPOSE THAT WOULD BE PROVOKING, SO YES, IT WOULD BE A LITTLE BAD.
AS BAD AS IF YOU'D HIT THE PERSON?
NO, NOT THAT BAD, BUT WORSE THAN IF YOU HADN'T THROWN IT AT ALL.
SUPPOSE YOU JUST GRAZED THE PERSON. HOW BAD WOULD THAT BE?
SAY MAYBE YOU KNOCKED OFF HIS HAT AND HIS GLASSES OR SOMETHING.
THAT WOULD MEAN INSTANT DEATH.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

SCHWAK

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
THE DISHES. I ALSO VACUUMED AND MOPPED.
I DID SOME BAD STUFF THIS YEAR, DAD.
MY ONLY HOPE IS DOING ENOUGH GOOD STUFF TO BALANCE IT OUT FOR SANTA.
MY CAR NEEDS AN OIL CHANGE.
OH IT. WHAT'S IT TAKE? BABY OIL?

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

SOMEONE PAID $6 MILLION FOR A BANANA COVERED WITH A PIECE OF DUCT TAPE.
A BANANA... COVERED WITH DUCT TAPE?
WHY WOULD SOMEONE BUY A BROKEN BANANA?

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Belted area
6 Ship's sail
9 '60s chic
12 Host
13 Nest egg letters
14 URL ender
15 Bar mishap
16 Social groups
18 Opera legend Maria
20 Source
21 Wire measure
23 — card (cell phone insert)
24 Lincoln's coin
25 With (Fr.)
27 Saw
29 Home of St. Francis
31 Pizza topping
35 "Fast Car" singer Chapman
37 Jog
38 Skydiver's camera
41 Author Tolstoy
43 Whatever
44 "Superfood" berry
45 Signs from above?
47 Bodybuilder's pride
49 Pale purple
52 Last (Abbr.)
53 Dad on "Blackish"
54 Upright
55 McCourt memoir
56 — Alamos
57 Takes five

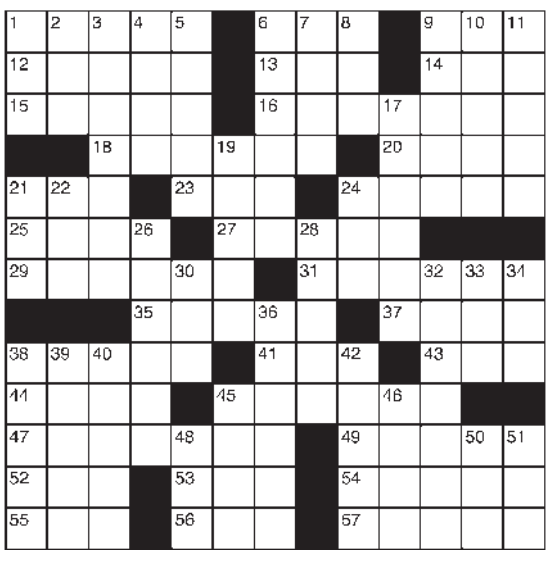
DOWN

1 Director Craven
2 Sound booster
3 Frozen spikes
4 Actress Ward
5 Goes public
6 Mexican yam
7 Eye part
8 Soap unit
9 Honeydew, e.g.
10 Ancient theater
11 Like many attics
17 College unit
19 TV chef Bastianich
21 Goat's plaint
22 ICU hookups
24 Corral
26 — acid
28 Trifled (with)
30 "No seats"
32 Prophets
33 Sine qua —
34 Hog haven
36 Concludes
38 Entire range
39 Eyelike openings
40 Peoples' histories
42 Edmonton player
45 Goose egg
46 Suffix for billion
48 "Bad" cholesterol
50 Do something
51 Dol. fractions

Solution time: 25 mins.

I	A	L	C			P	R	Y		O	W	N	S
E	L	O	I			A	T	E		S	E	E	P
A	B	C	D			C	E	O		P	L	E	A
M	A	K	E	D	O		W	O	R	L	D	S	
			R	A	P			N	E	W			
B	I	O	S		A	N	N	O	Y	E	R	S	
A	S	K			G	O	A			L	O	O	
T	E	A	R	D	O	W	N		S	L	I	D	
		Y	O	U			U	M	A				
C	L	O	U	D	S		N	Y	M	P	H	S	
O	A	K	S		A	J	A		B	E	E	T	
A	M	A	T		R	A	N		A	C	R	E	
L	A	Y	S		A	B	U		S	K	E	W	

Yesterday's answer 12-13



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Taylor Swift, 35; Jamie Foxx, 57; Steve Buscemi, 67; Wendie Malick, 74.

Happy Birthday: Not all opportunities fit your circumstances. Taking advantage of too much simultaneously will result in mistakes due to misinformation and not taking the time necessary to plan your actions. A tight-fisted financial plan will help keep you out of debt. Develop the skills you enjoy using most, and you'll discover new outlets for income. Put your energy into gaining monetary profits. Partnerships look promising but require ironclad contracts. Your numbers are 6, 14, 22, 25, 31, 34, 46.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Check out groups of interest, attend festive events that offer good connections to individuals you share common interests with, and focus on personal growth, socializing and taking better care of yourself physically and financially. Love is in the stars; travel and educational pursuits will lead to new beginnings. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Take a stance and make your voice heard to avoid missing an opportunity. An honest answer will buy you time to follow your heart and determine what works best. A new look or approach to how you use or present your skills will affect how others respond. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* A playful attitude will attract positive attention. Opportunities will come your way if you are open regarding what you can do and how you see yourself moving forward. A makeover will give you the boost to step into the spotlight. Romance is on the rise. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Use your intuition, and you'll discover how to get others to do and see things your way. Get the facts and dismiss uncertainty. Knowing what you want and pitching your plans will attract someone who sees the value in what you offer. Put your wish list together and follow through. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Raise the bar and go for the gold. Do the groundwork now for what you want to achieve next year. Use your energy constructively, and you'll get the support you need. A romantic gesture will bring you closer to someone you love. Pay attention to how much you consume to avoid aftereffects. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Keep your emotions hidden until you feel comfortable sharing your beliefs with the company you encounter. Change, travel, networking and expanding your circle of friends are favored. Reconnecting with someone from your past will be enlightening. Help those facing tough times and make a difference. ✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Get out, meet and greet, and enjoy social events in your community. Taking time to express your feelings and share your thoughts will resonate with someone you encounter. Fitness and diet will result in a new and improved you. Taking love or romance to the next level is possible. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* You are overdue for a change. Share your dreams with someone special to see if you are heading in the same direction. Explore your options and put a plan in place that can get you where you want to go. Protect against injury or situations that can jeopardize your health. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Time passes fast, but to act without enough preparation will set you back. Protect your assets and possessions from anyone wanting to take advantage of you. Simplify your life instead of taking on too much and falling short of your expectations. Take control and leave nothing incomplete. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Home improvements will make your place more inviting. Entertaining people who make you smile and stimulate your mind will lead to lively conversations that offer plenty to think about and plan for in the new year. Keep your important papers, assets and possessions safe from scammers. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* High energy will help you handle pressing year-end matters. The peace of mind you get from taking care of business will allow you the freedom you deserve to enjoy life and festive events. When one door closes, another will open. Follow your heart and live in the moment. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Dig in and get things done before someone criticizes or complains. Keep life simple and your plans a secret until everything is in place. Don't believe everything you hear; if someone offers you something, get it in writing. Discipline and living up to your promises will help control the outcome. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are ambitious, talkative and entertaining. You are changeable and trendy.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

			6	3	7			
8		9		4	2			
	4	5	9				8	3
6						9		
	8	1					6	4
3		7	8	1		4		
	1	8		5	3	6	7	
5	6		7			1		

Difficulty: ★★★★ 12/13

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

8	6	2	1	4	3	7	5	9
5	3	9	7	6	8	4	2	1
7	4	1	5	2	9	6	8	3
1	7	8	3	9	6	2	4	5
2	5	6	4	1	7	9	3	8
3	9	4	8	5	2	1	6	7
6	2	5	9	8	1	3	7	4
9	8	3	2	7	4	5	1	6
4	1	7	6	3	5	8	9	2

Difficulty: ★★★ 12/12

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

PLAYING FUTSAL Solution: 9 letters

N	C	E	N	T	E	R	G	T	C	A	T	N	O	C
O	O	E	G	N	I	N	N	U	R	S	H	O	O	T
I	R	I	C	N	I	E	L	K	C	A	T	M	A	N
T	N	H	S	N	I	L	T	N	I	O	P	R	P	U
C	E	C	I	S	A	D	G	A	M	E	G	E	M	O
A	R	A	D	W	E	L	A	M	T	E	H	K	U	C
R	R	O	A	A	S	S	A	E	T	O	V	I	P	H
T	H	C	T	I	P	T	S	B	H	E	F	R	E	A
S	O	L	E	W	C	N	R	O	O	L	L	T	E	M
L	L	A	B	H	I	O	I	O	P	U	A	S	R	P
L	A	O	G	O	H	N	S	H	P	R	N	S	E	I
I	D	R	A	C	D	L	G	P	S	S	K	C	F	O
R	R	D	N	O	I	Y	T	E	A	M	E	O	E	N
D	C	A	O	D	O	E	L	O	R	C	R	R	R	U
R	T	R	E	R	U	S	S	E	R	P	E	E	W	S

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Anchor, Balance, Ball, Body, Bounce, Card, Center, Champion, Coach, Compete, Contact, Corner, Count, Drills, Flanker, Game, Goal, Heading, Indoor, Match, Pitch, Pivot, Point, Possession, Pressure, Pump, Referee, Role, Rule, Running, Score, Shin Pad, Shoot, Slide, Sole, Space, Sports, Strike, Sweep, Tackle, Target, Team, Traction, Training, Wall, Winger

Yesterday's Answer: Plugs

For **WONDERWORD** apps, books & more, visit Wonderword.com, or call 1-855-232-2367.

Rockets beat Warriors, 91-90, to reach NBA Cup semifinals

HOUSTON (AP)—Jalen Green made two free throws with 3.5 seconds left and the Houston Rockets beat the Golden State Warriors 91-90 on Wednesday night to advance to the NBA Cup semifinals in Las Vegas.

Houston snapped a 15-game skid against the Warriors, winning for the first time in the series since Feb. 20, 2020. The Rockets will face Oklahoma City, which beat Dallas in the other West quarterfinal game on Tuesday night, in the semifinals on Saturday.

Alperen Sengun led the Rockets with 26 points and 11 rebounds and Jabari Smith Jr. added 15 points.

Houston led by 14 before falling behind late to set up the thrilling finish.

Houston trailed by six with about 1 1/2 minutes left before Fred VanVleet made a 3-pointer and Sengun added a layup with 27 seconds to go to cut the lead to one.

Stephen Curry missed a 3-pointer with 11 seconds left and Gary Payton II grabbed the rebound, but Green intercepted his pass and was fouled by Jonathan Kuminga to set up the winning free throws.

The Warriors had a chance to win it at the buzzer but Smith blocked Brandin Podziemski's 3-point attempt.

AP

Houston Rockets guard Jalen Green celebrates after a dunk during the first half of an Emirates NBA cup tournament quarterfinal basketball game against the Golden State Warriors in Houston, Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2024.

Golden State beat the Rockets twice this season without Curry before losing Wednesday in a game where he had 19 points.

This young Rockets team showed poise in finishing this one after squandering a double-digit lead.

Green's hustle on getting the ball late to draw the foul to set up the winning free throws.

Houston won despite making just 6 of 27 3-pointers.

While Houston heads to Las Vegas this weekend, the Warriors will return to regular-season play Sunday at Dallas.

HAWKS 108, KNICKS 100

NEW YORK (AP)—Trae Young had 22 points and 11 assists, De'Andre Hunter and Jalen Johnson outplayed the Knicks frontcourt and the Atlanta Hawks took their surprising NBA Cup run all the way to the semifinals in Las Vegas, beating New York 108-100 on Wednesday night.

Hunter scored 24 points and Johnson had 21 points, 15 rebounds and seven assists for the Hawks, who were perhaps the surprise team of the tournament after knocking off the defending champion Celtics in Boston and NBA-leading Cleveland Cavaliers in group play to reach the knockout stage as the No. 3 seed in the East.

Now they will face another East power, the top-seeded Milwaukee Bucks, on Saturday in a semifinal matchup.

Josh Hart scored 21 points and Karl-Anthony Towns had 19 points and 19 rebounds for the Knicks, who went 4-0 in group play and shot out to a 12-point lead Wednesday. But as in the 2021 playoffs, it was Young who was celebrating on the floor of Madison Square Garden after eliminating the Knicks.

Hawks:Just advancing out of a tough pool group would have been a great experience for some young Hawks players. Now they can go and win the whole thing with two victories in Las Vegas.

One of the favorites to win the tournament had a shockingly poor second half and fell to 0-2 against Atlanta this season.

The Knicks led 66-62 before Young scored eight straight points, pointing to the floor after a 31-footer for his second consecutive 3-pointer. Hunter then hit a 3 to cap an 11-0 surge during which Atlanta took its first lead of the game and went ahead 73-66.

Atlanta outscored New York 61-46 in the second half.

While the Hawks go to Las Vegas, the Knicks will go to Orlando for a game Sunday.

Butler says he's not worrying about his future with Heat amid trade speculation

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP BASKETBALL WRITER

Jimmy Butler knows there are tons of questions about his future with the Miami Heat. He might get traded, he might leave as a free agent next summer, he might exercise a $52.4-million option to return to the Heat or he might get a new contract.

"Who knows?" Butler asked.

Evidently, even he doesn't have answers.

The Heat forward—who has led the team to a pair of NBA Finals trips in his Miami tenure—spoke out about trade speculation Wednesday, telling reporters after practice that he doesn't mind his name being in the rumor mill. ESPN reported earlier in the week that the Heat are open to receiving trade offers; that wouldn't be surprising, given Butler's contract status and the possibility that he might leave with the Heat getting nothing in return next summer.

"I actually like it," said Butler, who is averaging 19 points per game this season. "It's good to be talked about. I don't think there's such a thing as bad publicity—to a point."

AP

Miami Heat NBA basketball player Jimmy Butler walks through his BIGFACE coffee shop on its opening day in the Design District neighborhood of Miami during Miami Art Week Friday, Dec. 6, 2024.

Butler's future in Miami has been a talking point for some time now.

The Heat could have offered an extension last summer and chose not to, presumably for a variety of reasons including Butler's age—he's 35—and the fact that he missed 26% of Miami's games over his first five seasons with the team.

He still clearly impacts winning: Miami is 8-2 this season when he scores at least 18 points. And the Heat aren't new to trade speculation; Tyler Herro has been the centerpiece of rumors in each of the last three summers. He is still in Miami, playing at an All-Star level and is the reigning Eastern Conference player of the week.

"Any other narrative, I don't care. Nobody should because most of this stuff has just been all a bunch of gibberish," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said this week.

Butler said Wednesday that money doesn't really matter to him at this point. He stopped short of saying that he wants to absolutely remain in Miami—"I'm pretty sure y'all are going to get a report that's going to say otherwise anyways, so there's no sense in me answering that question," he said—and that he's not fixated on extensions or trades.

"My kids matter, my happiness matters, my well-being matters and my family matters," Butler said. "Right now, it's all about competing, staying healthy, playing some great basketball. I think I've done that so far, so we'll see what we got."

It has been social media fodder for a few days, with some even suggesting that Butler's hair dye in recent weeks—sometimes yellow, sometimes blue, sometimes red—has matched the teams some of the trade speculation links him to like Golden State, Dallas and Houston.

That said, he has insisted since arriving in Miami that he wants to bring the team another championship. That stance has not changed.

"We're going to continue to win and I'm proud of the guys," Butler said. "You see everybody out here working and we know what we're capable of."

Rolling dice on his way to Las Vegas, Trae Young shows he's always a safe bet at MSG

NEW YORK (AP)—Trae Young was dribbling out the clock Wednesday night when he leaned down toward New York's center-court logo and pretended he was shooting dice.

"We're going to Vegas," the Atlanta guard said, "so that's what I had to."

When he's at Madison Square Garden, always bet on Young.

The court was orange this time, but otherwise it looked and felt like the 2021 playoffs. The Knicks had just been eliminated, and Young was celebrating in the middle of their arena.

The star guard had 22 points and 11 assists, leading the Hawks to a 108-100 victory in the NBA Cup quarterfinals. They will head to Las Vegas to play the Milwaukee Bucks on Saturday.

Young emerged as a villain to Knicks fans in 2021, when New York reached the postseason for the first time in eight years and drew the Hawks in the first round. They profanely taunted him in Game 1, even mocking his hair, but the point guard got the last word.

He made a runner in the lane with 0.9 seconds remaining to give Atlanta a 107-105 victory in that series opener. When the series returned to New York for Game 5, Young scored 36 points before taking a bow like a Broadway actor as the Hawks finished the series.

He had bowed before as a way to punctuate a victory. The rolling the dice celebration was new for this game.

"I planned that one with my little brother a few days ago," he said. "We had talked about that and I mean, I knew what I was going to do."

Young said he didn't hear venom like he did in 2021 until late in the game. The Knicks controlled the first half, leading by 12 at one point, but Atlanta turned things around in the third quarter.

Young, the NBA's assists leader, was right in the middle of the decisive rally. He scored eight straight points in one stretch of the third quarter, pointing to the floor to show how deep he was when he made a 31-footer for his second consecutive 3-pointer.

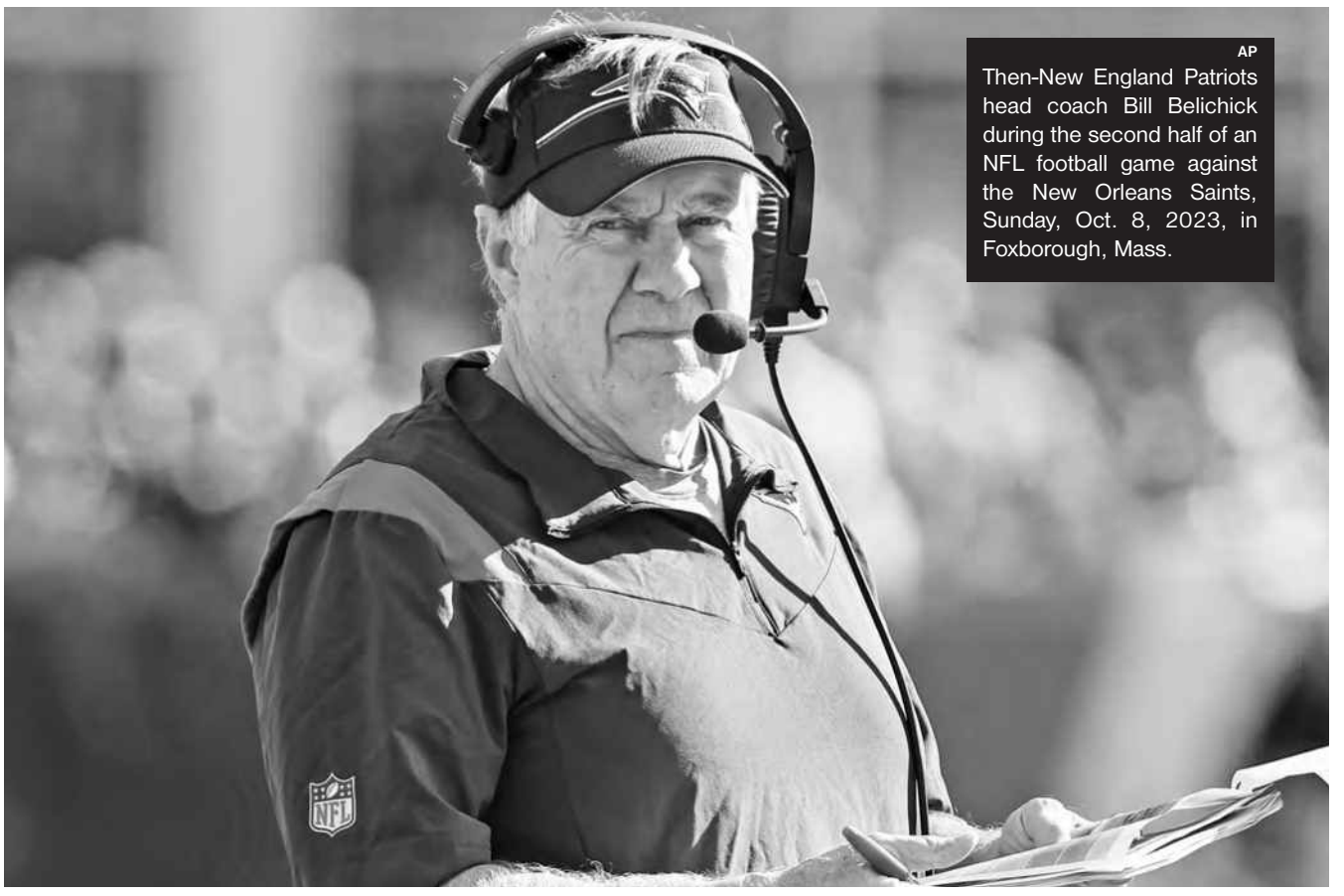
"There was a point in the game when he could feel the game," Hawks coach Quin Snyder said.

The Hawks outscored the Knicks 61-46 in the second half, seizing such control that a number of fans headed to the exits before the finish. Some who were still there booed Young one last time during his celebration.

"We should win the game if we don't want him to do that," Knicks guard Jalen Brunson said.

Bill Belichick to take over as coach of Tar Heels

By ROB MAADDI and AARON BEARD
AP SPORTS WRITERS



AP
Then-New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick during the second half of an NFL football game against the New Orleans Saints, Sunday, Oct. 8, 2023, in Foxborough, Mass.

Bill Belichick had seemingly been waiting for the right opportunity to return to an NFL sideline. Instead, the six-time Super Bowl-winning head coach is headed to the college ranks to take over at North Carolina.

The school announced it had reached a five-year deal with Belichick on Wednesday night, roughly a week after Belichick's name surfaced as an unlikely candidate to replace the program's winningest coach in Mack Brown. The deal requires approval by UNC trustees as well as the UNC public system's governors; an introductory news conference has yet to be scheduled.

Moving on from the 73-year-old Brown to hire the 72-year-old Belichick means UNC is turning to a coach who has never worked at the college level, yet had incredible success in the NFL alongside quarterback Tom Brady throughout most of his 24-year tenure with the Patriots, which ended last season.

There's also at least a small family tie to the UNC program for Belichick; his late father, Steve, was an assistant coach for the Tar Heels from 1953-55.

"I am excited for the opportunity at UNC-Chapel Hill," Belichick said in a statement. "I grew up around college football with my dad and treasured those times. I have always wanted to coach in college and now I look forward to building the football program in Chapel Hill.

He's arriving on campus at a time of rapid changes in college athletics, from free player movement through the transfer portal and athletes' ability to cash in on endorsements to the looming arrival of revenue sharing. Consider the Belichick hiring a novel approach by the school to rethinking how it will approach those challenges, led by someone known for success at the highest level of the sport.

"We know that college athletics is changing, and those changes require new and innovative thinking," UNC athletics director Bubba Cunningham said in a statement. "Bill Belichick is a football legend, and hiring him to lead our program represents a new approach that will ensure Carolina football can evolve, compete and win — today and in the future."

Belichick holds 333 career regular-season and postseason wins in the NFL, trailing only Don Shula's 347 for the NFL record, while his 31 playoff wins are the most in league history.

He's the second coach to win a Super Bowl and then later become a college head coach; Bill Walsh won three Super Bowls with the San Francisco 49ers and later went 17-17-1 at Stanford from 1992-94.

He had been linked to NFL jobs in the time since his departure from the Patriots, notably the Atlanta Falcons in January. That's why word of Belichick's conversations with UNC—first reported by Inside Carolina and confirmed by the AP last week—stirred such surprise as an unexpected and unconventional candidate.

But the two sides had been in discussions for several days working on terms before finally reaching an agreement to cap what once seemed an improbable outcome.

Belichick said Monday on ESPN's "The Pat McAfee Show" that he'd had "a couple of good conversations" with UNC chancellor Lee Roberts and that he'd spent much of the past year taking a "longer look" at college football.

"If I was in a college program, the college program would be a pipeline to the NFL for the players that had the ability to play in the NFL," Belichick said Monday. "It would be a professional program: training, nutrition, scheme, coaching, techniques that would transfer to the NFL.

"It would be an NFL program at a college level. And an education that would get the players ready for their career after football, whether that was the end of their college career or at the end of their pro career."

Belichick began his NFL coaching career as an assistant with the Baltimore Colts in 1975 and later worked as defensive coordinator under Bill Parcells with the New York Giants, winning two Super Bowls during that stint. He also spent five seasons as head coach of the Cleveland Browns in the first half of the 1990s.

He got his second shot as a head coach in 2000 with the Patriots. And in his second year, as Brady rose to stardom, Belichick won his first Super Bowl title as a head coach.

The Belichick-Brady duo went on to win the Super Bowl for the 2003, 2004, 2014, 2016 and 2018 seasons, and Belichick was The Associated Press NFL coach of the year three times.

Now he takes over a UNC program that is facing a familiar challenge of how to build a sustained winner. The program had reached elite levels in moments rather than eras, notably with Brown building UNC into top-10 national stats (1996, 1997) to end his first tenure in Chapel Hill before taking over at Texas or the Tar Heels cracking the top 10 of the AP Top 25 poll briefly in 2015 and 2020.

The peak of Brown's second tenure came with a nine-win season and trip to the Atlantic Coast Conference championship game in 2022 behind eventual No. 3 overall NFL draft pick Drake Maye, who was coincidentally drafted by the Patriots for their first post-Belichick year.

The school announced Nov. 26 that Brown wouldn't return for a seventh season in his second stint in Chapel Hill, a firing that became effective after the program's all-time wins leader coached his finale in the Nov. 30 loss to rival N.C. State.

Freddie Kitchens, himself a former Browns head coach, has been working as the interim coach as the Tar Heels prepare to face UConn in the Fenway Bowl on Dec. 28.

Vince Carter, Tracy McGrady join Bills' ownership group as limited partners

IRVING, Texas (AP) — Basketball Hall of Famers Vince Carter and Tracy McGrady are among 10 limited partners who have joined the Buffalo Bills' ownership group.

The noncontrolling, minority interests were approved Wednesday by NFL team owners at the league's winter meetings. This is the first time in Bills' franchise history that minority owners have been added.

NFL team owners approved a measure earlier this year that allows investments into franchises by private equity funds. The league's ownership rules had been among the most restrictive in professional sports.

Other teams also are finalizing the addition of limited partners. NFL team owners also approved Wednesday the minority, noncontrolling interest sales involving the Miami Dolphins and Philadelphia Eagles.

Terry and Kim Pegula bought the Bills for $1.4 billion from the estate of late Hall of Fame owner Ralph Wilson in 2014.

As part of the deal, they will retain about 79% control of the team, a person with knowledge of the sale told The Associated Press. Under the sale terms, the Bills were valued "well north of $4.5 billion," a second person told the AP, meaning the Pegulas will get more than $927 million in the deal.

Both people spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity because the Bills did not reveal those details.

Carter and McGrady's connections to Toronto — both played for the NBA Raptors — are considered advantages because of their potential to help the small-market team generate further interest in Canada's largest city, located about a two-hour drive from Buffalo. Toronto is considered part of the Bills' marketing region, with southern Ontario residents representing more than 15% of the team's season-ticket base.

Former U.S. National Team soccer player and MLS Champion Jozy Altidore is among the new limited partners.

The remaining seven partners, pending final closing of the agreements: private investment firm Arctos, Rob Palumbo, co-managing partner of Accel-KKR; Sue McCollum, CEO and owner of beverage distribution companies Eagle Brand Sales and Double Eagle Distributing; Theresia Gouw, co-founder and managing partner of the venture capital firm Acrew Capital; Rob Ward, co-founder, general partner of venture capital firm Meritech Capital; Mike Joo, COO, Global Corporate and Investment Banking and Head of North America Corporate and Investment Banking at Bank of America; and Tom Burger, co-founder and managing partner of the investment firm Gridiron Capital.

"I'm the kind of person that I believe two heads are better than one," Terry Pegula said. "We can bring in Arctos with their experience worldwide and multiple sports, I think is a good thing. And I'm willing to listen on the business side to any input they may have. Our other limiteds, the individuals, most of them are Bills fans from their youth. They were Bills fans before I was a Bills fan. So I'm excited to deal with them. One of the things that I wanted to accomplish also was to bring in some women. We've got two female investors who are very successful business people. I've got three daughters that are involved in the team, hopefully more so in the future. And I think that's a good thing for them to learn some business acumen from and have some female input. Because when Kim went down, that was a loss of influence on my daughters. As far as the business side goes, she's unable to be involved."

Kim Pegula is still recovering from a debilitating cardiac arrest suffered in June 2022.

Dolphins owner Stephen Ross announced an investment deal with Ares Management funds and Brooklyn Nets owners Joe Tsai and Oliver Weisberg.

The transaction includes assets such as Hard Rock Stadium and the Formula 1 Crypto.com Miami Grand Prix, with the investment fueling continued growth across Ross' diverse South Florida-based sports and entertainment portfolio. Ares will acquire a 10% stake, while Tsai and Weisberg together will hold a 3% interest, pending final closing of the agreements.

Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie received approval for the sale of an 8% interest of the team to two family investment groups, a person familiar with the agreement told the AP. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the team hasn't announced the deal.

Seven-time Super Bowl champion Tom Brady already purchased a minority stake in the Las Vegas Raiders in a deal approved by NFL team owners in October.

Soto gets free luxury suite up to 4 premium tickets for home games

AP

New York Yankees' Juan Soto speaks during media day for the baseball World Series, Oct. 24, 2024, in Los Angeles.

DALLAS (AP)—Juan Soto gets free use of a luxury suite and up to four premium tickets behind home plate for regular-season and postseason New York Mets home games as part of his record $765 million, 15-year contract that was finalized Wednesday.

The Mets also agreed to provide personal team security for the All-Star outfielder and his family at the team's expense for all spring training and regular-season home and road games, according to details of the agreement obtained by The Associated Press. Major League Baseball teams usually provide security for player families in seating areas at ballparks.

New York also agreed to assist Soto's family for in-season travel arrangements, guaranteed Soto will have uniform No. 22 and included eight types of award bonuses.

Soto wore No. 22 with all his previous major league teams: the Nationals, Padres and Yankees. Young third baseman Brett Baty wore No. 22 with the Mets the past three seasons.

The Mets will formally introduce Soto in a news conference Thursday afternoon at Citi Field.

"This is a seminal moment in franchise history," owners Steve and Alex Cohen said in a statement. "Juan Soto is a generational talent. He is not only bringing staggering historical statistics with him but also a championship pedigree."

Soto's suite will be valued at the Mets' prevailing prices, presumably for tax purposes, and after 2025 he can by each Jan. 15 modify or give up his suite selection for the upcoming season. He can request the premium tickets, to be used by family members, no later than 72 hours before the scheduled game time.

The Yankees had refused to offer Soto a free suite.

"Some high-end players that make a lot of money for us, if they want suites they buy them ... whether it's CC (Sabathia), whether it's (Aaron) Judge, whether it's (Gerrit) Cole, whether it's any of these guys," general manager Brian Cashman said. "We've gone through a process on previous negotiations where asks might have happened and this is what we did and we're going to honor those, so no regrets there."

» As part of $765M Mets deal

Cashman said the Yankees have a shared suite for player families and a family room with babysitting.

Soto gets a $75 million signing bonus, payable within 60 days of the agreement's approval by the commissioner's office. The deal for the 26-year-old slugger, which tops Shohei Ohtani's $700 million, 10-year contract with the Dodgers, was reached Sunday pending a physical that took place Tuesday.

Soto receives salaries of $46,875,000 each in 2025 and 2026, $42.5 million in 2027, $46,875,000 apiece in 2028 and 2029 and $46 million in each of the final 10 seasons.

Soto has a contingent right to opt out of the agreement after the 2029 World Series to become a free agent again. But the Mets have an option to negate that opt-out provision by increasing the yearly salaries for 2030-39 by $4 million annually to $50 million and raising the total value to $805 million. If the club does not exercise its option to negate the opt-out provision by the third day after the World Series, Soto can make his opt-out decision by the fifth day after the Series.

He has a full no-trade provision and gets a hotel suite on road trips.

"Today's signing further solidifies our organizational commitment to consistent championship competitiveness," Mets president of baseball operations David Stearns said. "Not only does Juan provide historic levels of on field production, but his joy, intensity, and passion for the game mirror our budding culture. We are thrilled to add him to our team and look forward to watching his excellence for years to come."

Soto would receive a $500,000 bonus for winning his first Most Valuable Player award and $1 million for each MVP award. He would get $350,000 for finishing second in the voting and $150,000 for finishing third through fifth. Soto was third in AL voting this year.

He would earn $100,000 for each All-Star selection and Gold Glove, $350,000 for World Series MVP and $150,000 for League Championship Series MVP.

Soto would get $100,000 for selection to the All-MLB first or second team, $150,000 for a Silver Slugger award and $100,000 for the Hank Aaron Award.

Award bonuses are to be paid by the Jan. 31 after the season in which the bonus is earned.

PIPER

From page 16

the water with precision and agility and broke another national record last Wednesday—this time in the 50m backstroke with a time of 31.06 seconds.

She said of her record-breaking swim, "I feel really great that I have accomplished setting a new record. In my race I was thinking about swimming as hard as I can. Trying my best really helped me get the record."

Then, the team splashed to a new 4x50m mixed medley national record with a time of 1:55.26 also last Wednesday. The old record of 1:58.93 was set in Australia in 2022.

The team consisted of Raho, 16-year-old Kouki Watanabe, 18-year-old Taiyo Akimaru, and 16-year-old Maria Batallones.

Before the team took to the pool, NMI national swimming team coach head coach Richard Sikkel said they thought they could challenge the national record—which they did with flying colors.

Sikkel then said of his young wards after breaking the relay record, "The swimmers did their calculations with their expected splits and figured they'd have a chance to break the record. They did just that. They executed their individual parts perfectly to come out with a faster time. Piper set the tone with a good backstroke leg. Kouki had a quick breaststroke and closed the gap with the other teams. Taiyo kept pace and Maria clocked a 28 for the final 50m freestyle to close the race."

He added, "I am impressed with the swimmers' composure, they are able to quell their nerves and perform at their level."

Watanabe then competed in the 100m breaststroke last Wednesday and came close to breaking the national record. He came in at 1:06.66 while his goal was two seconds above at 1:08. Sikkel said with that, "it was a great swim. He is close to the national record."

Watanabe said of his swim, "My 100m breaststroke felt great throughout the race. I was able to maintain a strong pace and I was able to stay focused on my technique. The first 50m felt smooth, and I pushed through the second half without losing too much speed. My turns were solid, and I stayed aggressive. Overall, I am really happy with my performance and felt like I gave it my all."

The championships are until Sunday, Dec. 15.

With the team and head coach Sikkel is NMI Swimming Federation official John Hirsch.

2ND

From page 16

Koji Taisakan, Oscar Setefano, Cain Castro, Jesse Olopai, Jason Limes, Matthew Reyes, Donald Pangelinan, Mamerto Forbes, Luis Claridades, Gregorio Sablan, Claude Celis, and Freddie Guerrero.

Saipan Team 2 includes Darien Quitugua, Jeffrey Quitugua Jr, Stanley Choway, Kevin Ruwaath, James Venus, Caleb Yug, Daniel Taisakan, Reed Camacho, Darren Duenas, and Andre Jones.

Saipan women's team is made up of Tatiana Mettao Pangelinan, Tahira Mori Setefano, Maria Castro, Ti'ana Villanueva, Vivalyn Yangirelit, Davian Atalig, Jahsmin Ramon, Kailani Laniyo, Aiko Rasiang, and Fina Faisao.

As for Guam's teams, the men's team includes Damian Carbuillido, Palikun Welly, Reiko Mendiola, Zeke Santos, Henry Mendiola, Jude Mendiola, Justin Tanguileg, Manny Cruz, Brandon Burgos, Joe Mateo, Jayton Penaflor, Ryan Paulus, Jerome Uson, Troy Fritz, Amiotonu San Nicolas, and Thomas Cruz.

Guam's women's team is made up of Cadance Mansapit, Clara Wong, Danielle Robles, Elexis Gogue, Jaevoleen Guzman, Jaeana Smoak, Jaicia Vita, Iolana Nidine Untalan, Ha'ane Taitano, Rozlyn Mendiola, Victoria Botelho, and Tori Starr.

MRC board member Koji Taisakan said the purpose of the event "is to increase the awareness to our island that we do have a rugby team, and obviously get a good match in between Saipan and Guam."

He said of the teams, "The Guam Rugby Club is bringing a lot of experience with them, some of those players have competed in [the] Philippines, and they have some sort of rugby tournament every two-three months. So, for our team here, I have faith in them, but the majority of them are playing to gain the experience."

As for the expectations of the tourney, he said, "For the players, I would say that, expect to get hit, and hit, and hit constantly, expect to tire out, but just keep pushing through. For the fans, expect a good match between Saipan and Guam, and don't sleep on the ladies, the ladies have potential, and especially talent."

With how rugby is developing in the CNMI however, he said, "As sad as it is to say, it's only when we are a month away from an actual game, is when the numbers really increase. But if it's just a regular practice, we're not where we want to be in terms of numbers."

The sponsors of the event are Federated States of Micronesia Bank, Marpac, Shirley's Catering, Monster Pizza, Coca-Cola, Pacific Rim, and Ur Tents.

DODGERS

From page 16

Brewers runners on base in the second inning to maintain their four-run lead.

The Brewers then tacked on three in the third from Ansen Jones, Hector Efraim, and Jack Cepeda, but the Dodgers widened their lead with three runs of their own for a 10-6 game.

From there, the Dodgers' accuracy with their bats proved too much for Brewers pitching and defense as they connected with back-to-back RBI hits for an even bigger lead. Rob Bansil started off their offensive run in the fourth, followed by a run scored by Ed Manibusan, and two more for a 14-6 lead.

The Brewers didn't give up and tried to take shot after shot against Dodgers pitching. They had some traffic on the bases but could not capitalize as the Dodgers defense proved to be as lethal as their offense.

The Brewers could only round the bases four more times in the fourth and fifth inning before they closed up shop.

Meanwhile, the Dodgers scored one run each in the fifth, sixth, and seventh inning for a 17-10 final.

Last Tuesday, the Blue Jays soared above the Falcons, 16-6, and the Pirates drowned the Marlins, 17-5.

Rockets beat Warriors, 91-90, to reach NBA Cup semifinals.

PAGE 13

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Soto gets free luxury suite up to 4 premium tickets for home games .

PAGE 15

Piper, relay team set new nat'l records

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The youngest member of the four-person NMI swim crew, Frances Piper Raho, was the first Pacific Islander to compete in the 2024 World Aquatics Swimming Championships in Budapest, Hungary, and she had a lot to show for it.

LEIGH GASES

File photo shows Frances Piper Raho posing for a photo during the 2023 Pacific Games in Solomon Islands.

Last Tuesday, the 15-year-old first reset the CNMI national record in the 100m backstroke at 1:09.62, which is now also her personal best. She broke the almost 20-year record time of 1:10.12 set by Nina Mosley in 2005.

She recorded a first lap time of 15.84 seconds, followed by a split times of 17.30 seconds, 18.34 seconds, and 18.14 seconds for a total of 1:09.62.

Raho wasn't done making waves as she glided through

See PIPER on Page 15

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, NMI national swimming team head coach Richard Sikkel, Taiyo Akimaru, Frances Piper Raho, Maria Batallones, and Kouki Watanabe, and NMI Swimming Federation official John Hirsch pose for a photo during the 2024 World Aquatics Swimming Championships in Budapest, Hungary.

2nd Annual Marianas Rugby Cup this Saturday

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Marianas Rugby Club and Guam Rugby Club are set to go head-to-head once again in the 2nd Annual Marianas Rugby Cup tournament at the Oleai Sports Complex tomorrow, Dec. 14.

Catch the action at 10am as five teams brave Saipan's unpredictable weather for a shot of their names to be etched on the perpetual cup. In the inaugural tourney last year, the veteran Guam team took home the title in the rugby 7s tourney after they won all seven matches over Saipan's recently developed teams.

Saipan has three teams—Team 1, Team 2, and a women's team.

Saipan Team 1 consists of

See 2ND on Page 15

LEIGH GASES

File phxoto shows a Marianas Rugby Club player getting tackled by a Guam Rugby Club player during the Inaugural Marianas Rugby Cup match last December at the Oleai Sports Complex.

Dodgers shake down Brewers, 17-10

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Dodgers beat the Brewers black and blue, 17-10, in the 2024 Saipan Baseball League Masters League last Wednesday at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

The Brewers actually had an early lead 3-2 at the end of the first inning, but the Dodgers' firepower activated in the second. John Acosta, Nick Reyes, Mel Manahane, Mark Villagomez, Angel Reyes, and Geoffrey Cruz all rounded the bases to turn the tables around in the Dodgers' favor, 7-3.

Dodgers pitching then got their stuff together and left

See DODGERS on Page 15

LEIGH GASES

A Dodgers runner at third base gets ready to move as a batter is in the box during one of their games in the 2024 Saipan Baseball League Masters League at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

LEIGH GASES

Dodgers pitcher Geoffrey Cruz throws a pitch during one of their games in the 2024 Saipan Baseball League Masters League at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.